THESE FIFTY YEARS

Based on the pamphlet Pioneer Days in the First Baptist Church in Northern Alberta, by Mrs. Thomas Bellamy.

Written and directed by Margaret Ellis Thompson

Scenes I, II and III in the living room of the Bellamy home, deep in the woods on 101st Street, where the Tegler Building now stands. Scene IV in the newly built church on 100A Street. These characters should be taken by fairly young people, in the costume of the 1880's, since they were not especially "fashionable".

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Scene I.

The Bellamy Home, April 29, 1892. Seated are Mr. and Mrs. Thomas Bellamy, Mr. Douglas Petrie. There is a knock at the door.

Mrs. Bellamy: Do come in, Mrs. Gainer. (There is a little flurry of taking Mrs. Gainer's coat and finding her a chair.) I think you know Mr. Douglas Petrie, Mrs. John Gainer? Did you have any difficulty in crossing the river?

Mrs. Gainer: O no; both the lower and the upper ferry are working now. There is still some ice running, but we got across all right. The break-up was late this year.

Mr. Bellamy: Yes, and for a week no freight could be brought over from the railway sheds on the South Side. Some day we must have a bridge across the river, for freight at least.

Mr. Petrie: Some day we shall have a bridge across the river for the railway itself. It is ridiculous to stop it at Strathcona when all the real settlement of this district will be to the north and west.

Mrs. Gainer: That day is far off, I believe; and yet you know there are three hundred colonists from Parry Sound waiting in Strathcona now, and planning to settle to the north.

Mrs. Bellamy: Have those poor things found any place to live, yet?

Mrs. Gainer: The C.P.R. let them stay on the colonist cars for a few days, and some of them have lumber and have built temporary shacks. Of course they would have been away several days ago if it had not been for the ice breaking up just now.

Mrs. Bellamy: Something must be done immediately to provide accommodation for the immigrants. We advertise and bring them in, and then have nowhere even for them to sleep. I see in the Bulletin that a petition is being sent to have the Railway and the Government build a proper Immigration Hall, where at least they can live in comfort for a few days while they make their arrangements.

Mr. Petrie: There are a great many buildings needed right now. The mills will be working overtime before long, to provide enough lumber for us.

Mrs. Gainer: I wish they would provide enough lumber for sidewalks. Really the streets are ankle deep in mud now, and in a few weeks they will be just as deep in dust. A good sidewalk, on at least the principal streets, would help a lot.

(There is a knock at the door and Mr. Algar is admitted.)

Mr. Bellamy: Good evening, Mr. Algar. I am glad that you could come tonight. I believe you said you are a member of First Baptist Church in Calgary? This is my wife, and Mrs. John Gainer, and Mr. Douglas Petrie.

Mrs. Bellamy: I hear you are thinking of leaving Calgary and coming to live in a <u>real</u> town. (Laughter)

Mr. Algar: I know that Edmonton has always been a little jealous of Calgary, since the railway came through there, but they are both good towns in their own way. I think most of us would

have forgotten our differences, if only the Calgary Herald and the Edmonton Bulletin would let us do so; but they seem determined to keep the rivalry alive.

Mrs. Bellamy: Thomas, we shall need another chair; at least I hope so. Mr. and Mrs. Kennedy promised to drive in from Sturgeon, and they will possibly bring at least one or two more with them.

Mrs. Gainer: Isn't it nice to meet with some Baptist people again? The others are just fine, but it isn't the same thing, somehow.

Mr. Algar: I know that we in the Calgary Church are glad to hear that there will perhaps be another Baptist church here. At present our nearest neighbor is Regina.

Mr. Petrie: I believe someone is turning into the driveway now.

Mrs. Bellamy: Two men only; I wonder where Mrs. Kennedy is? (She goes to the door.) Won't you come in, Mrk Kennedy? I hope your wife is well.

Mr. Kennedy: She is well, thank you, but the youngest boy is ailing; she thought it best to stay at home. I have brought Mr. Manson with me; he was the only Baptist I could discover in our neighborhood.

Mrs. Bellamy: Good evening, Mr. Manson. May I present my husband? And Mrs. Gainer, this is Mr Manson, and Mr. John Kennedy. (They shake hands and acknowledge the introductions.) I believe you know Mr. Petrie? He and his wife are not long out from Scotland. And this is Mr. Algar from Calgary. (More handshakes.)

Mr. Kennedy: My wife sends her regrets; she had so hoped to be here. Ever since she almost barred you from her door, Mrs. Bellamy, she has talked of your visit to her.

Mrs. Bellamy: Well, it is a lonely settlement out there on the Sturgeon River; I don't blame her for being a little nervous of strangers when we called. But when we showed her the copy of the Canadian

Baptist, which we had driven out to deliver, she was glad enough to let us in; and indeed we could hardly get away.

Mr. Bellamy: Now perhaps if all are present, we had better begin the business of the meeting. You know that we are called together as Baptists in this new town, to discuss the advisability of opening a Baptist witness here. Might I suggest that Mr. Charles Algar of the Calgary Baptist church act as chairman?

All: Agreed.

Mr. Algar: Then I should like to suggest that Mrs. Bellamy be appointed Secretary, to take the minutes of this first meeting.

(Mrs. Bellamy and Mr. Algar take places at a central table, finding notebook etc.

Mr. Algar: Has anyone selected a chapter of Scripture with which we might open this meeting?

Mr. Petrie: I have been reading the book of the Judges, and it seems to me that the seventh chapter would be appropriate, because we must remind ourselves that it is "not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord."

Mr. Algar: May I ask you, then, to read the chapter, Mr. Petrie?

(Excerpts may be made, but should be read as from a Bible.)

Mr. Algar: Mr. Manson will lead us in prayer.

(An extemporary prayer would be best.)

Mrs. Gainer: I would like to move that the Secretary write to the Mission Board in Winnipeg, asking that a Missionary be sent to this point as soon as possible.

Mr. Kennedy: I second the motion. (Everyone is agreed.)

Mrs. Bellamy: And I would like to move that a subscription list be started, and that we an other who may join, pledge ourselves to the regular giving of a sum of money which will help to support a missionary, and to purchase a lot for the building of a church at the earliest possible moment.

Manson: I second the motion. (All agreed)

Manson: In the meantime, until we are in a position to hold services of our own, would it not be well to start a weekly evening prayer service?

Mrs. Bellamy: I should like to offer my home, which is fairly central, for that purpose, if it meets with your approval.

All: Thank you; that will be very nice. (etc.)

(A knock at the door; a telegraph boy enters - probably not in uniform.)

Boy: Telegram for Mr. and Mrs. Bellamy. Sign here, please.

Algar: I do hope it is not bad news. Would you like us to retire while you read it?

Mrs. Bellamy: (having opened the telegram) Certainly not; this is most excellent news. The Rev. H.G. Mellock, Superintendent of Missions for Western Canada, is in Calgary and could spend one day with us next week, if we think it worth his while to come for so short a time.

Mrs. Gainer: How wonderful! "Before they call, I will answer, and while they are yet speaking, I will hear." Should we not telegraph at once, asking him to come? And we might hold our first prayer meeting on the day when he will be here.

Algar: Is that agreed? (All murmur agreement) Then let it be so ordered. And let it never be forgotten that this night we have started a work which may in years to come be a beacon light of power and truth in this great growing land. May we repeat the Mizpah benediction as we separate.

All: May the Lord watch between me and thee, while we are absent one from the other. Amen.

(Curtain)

Scene II

The Bellamy Home, May 24, 1892. Mrs. Gainer, ~~Mrs. Beals~~ is seated alone in the room as the curtain rises. There is a knock at the door.

Mrs. Gainer: Come in, Mrs. Beals. Mrs. Bellamy was called away by a neighbor for a short time. She asked me to wait here for you until she returns. She will not be long.

Mrs. Beals: Isn't this a lovely day? I saw Saskatoon bushes in bloom as I came up the street.

Mrs. Gainer: Yes, and I have pansies blooming in my garden. Have you finished your planting yet?

Mrs. Beals: My husband is finishing his potatoes today. He always says that the 24th of May is the proper day for planting potatoes.

Mrs. Gainer: I notice in the Bulletin that Mr. Van Horne, President of the C.P.R., was in town for a short time. I believe the town council presented an appeal for the building of new immigrant sheds.

Mrs. Beals: Fine; I hope something will be done now. Have the Parry Sound colonists moved away yet?.

Mrs. Gainer: Yes, I understand they are all settled in the districts of their choice. Three hundred people at once is quite an influx. This country is really beginning to go ahead at last.

Mrs. Beals: If the C.P.R had had the sense to build along the northern route as they first planned, it would have filled up long before now. It really is a much better farming country than the prairie. Down south, they get one good crop in ten years, while here there has not been a crop failure in fifty years of agriculture - at least, so my husband says.

Mrs. Gainer: Isn't the river high? And running so swiftly. I was really rather nervous, crossing on the ferry. I shall be glad when it gets lower and less muddy. Really, when the water wagon

came round today, the stuff they poured out into my barrel looked more like coffee than water. I often wonder if it is safe to drink.

Mrs. Beals: My husband is talking of digging a well for ourselves. There is plenty of water, good water, not very far below the surface. But really I think the barrel water is safe enough - you never hear of typhoid here.

Mrs. Gainer: Perhaps it is; but I think you are right to have your own water supply. I think we must see what we can do at home; four boys make a lot of washing, and with water at twenty-five cents a barrel, it is quite an item.

Mrs. Beals: I see that eggs have gone up again, to 20 cents a dozen. They were 15 cents last week.

Mrs. Gainer: Yes, but it did not pay the farmers to bring them to town at that price, or perhaps they were too busy with the spring work. At any rate, the supply dropped off, so the price has gone up. Here comes Mrs. Bellamy now. (Mrs. Bellamy enters.)

Mrs. Bellamy: Good afternoon, Mrs. Beals. Mrs. Gainer has made you feel at home, I see.

Mrs. Gainer: I hope nothing was seriously wrong at your neighbor's?

Mrs. Bellamy: O, the youngest girl fell into a boiler of water, but fortunately it was not so very hot. I do not know what they were thinking of, to set it on the floor, with children about. I did think for a moment that there might be an occupant for the new burying ground, but she will be all right in the morning.

Mrs. Beals: Did you see in the Bulletin that they are asking people to remove the bodies of their loved ones from the cemetary at the back of the Methodist Church? They want to widen First Street, I believe.

Mrs. Gainer: It seems rather dreadful; why couldn't they leave the cemetary where it is, and plan the centre of town somewhere else? The new cemetary is so far out; it must be quite a mile west of town, and we shall never grow out that far.

Mrs. Bellamy: We do not know yet just which way the town will grow; but of one thing I am sure, and that is, that it will grow. Now, ladies, I have asked you here this afternoon because I think we should organize a Baptist Mission Circle.

Mrs. Beals: I am not sure that I know just what that is.

Mrs. Bellamy: It is a group of women who meet to study about foreign missions, to pray for the work and to give toward it. I know there is no other Mission Circle in this town, perhaps not another in the Territories. But they have them in the East and in the United States, and quite possibly in England, so I do not see why we should not have one here.

Mrs. Gainer: It seems a fine idea, but do you think that so few of us could do anything much? What should we do at our meetings?

Mrs. Bellamy: We can give - whether we are few or many. We could read missionary books aloud, or the reports in the North-West Baptist from our own mission field in India. We can pray for the work at home and abroad. And if there are but few of us now, you know how people are pouring into this country every day. It may be that very soon there will be enough Baptist women to form a relly large Circle. Is it your wish that we prodeed?

Mrs. Gainer and Mrs. Beals: Agreed.

Mrs. Bellamy: It is my thought that in addition to foreign mission work in the far fields, we have a foreign mission work right in our own home. I have seen many people at the Immigrant sheds over the river, looking very strange and forlorn. Would it not be well for us to visit and welcome them? We might invite them to our prayer meetings. We could get some tracts in German and other languages which we could distribute. In any case a friendly visit, even if we cannot converse with them, would be of some value, and show them that they have not come to a heathen land.

Mrs. Gainer: I am sure that that would be a work well worth doing. Might we take it in turns, two at a time, to visit at least once a week? I should be glad to go tomorrow if one of you will come with me.

Mrs. Beals: I will come, if you like.

Mrs. Bellamy: I think that very soon we shall have a Sunday School to which we may invite the children. I have a number of Baptist papers here, which you may take with you when you go. And next week I will go, and some other Baptist woman perhaps Mrs. Kennedy or Mrs. Petrie, will accompany me.

Mrs. Gainer: Might we take an offering at this meeting? I should like it to go to Foreign Missions. I suppose we should send it to the office of the Baptist Convention of Manitoba and the Northwest Territories, in Winnipeg, and they will see that it goes to India.

Mrs. Bellamy: I will send the money, if you wish. Now, Mrs. Beals, are you prepared to read from the Life of William Carey, which has just been published by his grandson, S. Pearce Carey? I have the book here. It is an excellently written biography, full of inspiration.

Mrs. Beals: I shall be glad to do that if I may borrow the book and take it home with me.

Mrs. Bellamy: And now, let us have a word of prayer before we close.

(Curtain)

Scene III

The Bellamy Home, September 25, 1892, after a Prayer Service. Present are R.J. Manson, Douglas Petrie, Mrs. Gainer, Mr. and Mrs. Bellamy, Mr. D.C. Cameron, and about six others. End of a hymn as curtain rises.

Mr. Petrie: This has been a most inspiring service. I should like to suggest now that we remain for a short business session. We have with us Deacon D.C. Cameron of the Winnipeg Baptist Church. He is an active worker in their Sunday School. He may inspire us to have a Sunday School likewise. Deacon Cameron, will you address us now?

Mr. Cameron: (Brief address on the value and necessity of a Sunday School)

Mrs. Bellamy: I am sure we have been inspired by these words. I should like to move that we organize a Sunday School, on the first Lord's Day in October, at three o'clock, in Ibbotson's Hall.

Mrs. Gainer: That is rather short notice. We shall need to find teachers and a superintendent at once, if the work is to be started next Sunday.

A Woman: What about Mr. Manson and Mr. Petrie for Superintendent and teacher?

Manson: I don't quite know about that. Mr. Petrie and I have both been working in the Presbyterian school. It will make things a little difficult for them if we leave them so suddenly.

Petrie: I am only one of the teachers at the Presbyterian Sunday School. I like my class, but I should be quite willing to leave it to someone else. But Mr. Manson is their Assistant

Superintendent. He has built up a faithful band of workers, who look to him for leadership. The Rev. D.G.McQueen depends very greatly upon him, I know. Do you think it quite fair to break up all that, for a program which, after all, we may not be able to keep going?

Mrs. Bellamy: Mr. Manson is a Baptist; this is a Baptist Sunday School; his duty is here.

Mrs. Gainer: It seems to me that a teacher's duty is to teach children the Bible, and to lead them to Christ. Do you mean to say that the Presbyterians are not doing that?

Mrs. Bellamy: No doubt they are, in a way, but it is not the Baptist way.

Manson: You do not need to think, Mrs. Bellamy and friends, that I have not given this matter a great deal of consideration. Most certainly the Presbyterians have the root of the matter in them, and yet I cannot think that the Presbyterial system of church government is as close to the Scriptures as our doctrine - the competency of the soul in matters of religion; that as Christ died for all men, all men are equally sinners in the sight of God; that all may be saved, and when saved are equal before God; therefore no Baptist may tell any other person, whether Baptist or unbeliever, what he must believe; no Baptist church or Assembly of churches may dictate to any other Baptist church, and no government may dictate to the conscience of any man. These are great matters, and when I speak to the young mena and women about accepting Christ, it hurts me that they may not put on Christ in baptism, as is our custom. And yet, it is hard to leave the work where I have been very happy for several years.

Petrie: Nevertheless, Brother Manson, I think you are answered out of your own mouth. Those are Baptist doc trines which you have enumerated. It is important that our children be instructed in those beliefs, and that they join our own church in our own way. I, for one, shall be proud to work under you in a Baptist school, even if it is a smaller one than the one in which we work now. Will you not come with us, and give us of your great experience to lead us in this new work?

Mrs. Kennedy: It is hard, I find, to teach our children all the things we want them to learn. There are many Catholics in our district, as you know. I should like so much to bring my children to a Baptist school, at least whenever the roads and the weather permit.

Mrs. Gainer: My boys are at the age when they think themselves too old for Sunday School, but I am sure that they would come to be taught by Mr. Manson.

Manson: Well, then, so let it be. We must tell all of our people about this decision. We can perhaps print something in the Bulletine. And those of us who have children will, I am sure, bring them with us on the next Lord's Day. By the way, Mrs. Bellamy, I understand that your Mission Circle is growing in numbers. Do you think you could find someone at least once a month who would tell a missionary story to the Sunday School children? I think they should be taught and trained to take an interest in Missions, and to give their pennies to the work on the foreign field.

Mrs. Bellamy: I am sure we shall be happy to do so.

(Curtain falls on a buzz of conversation.)

Scene IV

The new Baptist Church, October 1896. Present are Mrs. Bellamy, Mrs. Beals, 3 deacons, two members (men), one woman, one girl, another girl about twelve.

Senior Deacon: (presiding) Well, friends and fellow members, I do not need to outline the reason for calling this business meeting. You know it as well as I do. We have had no pastor for over eight months, and as far as I can see, no prospect of one before spring. The Deacons and Young People's Society have taken the evening services in turn, and we have just managed to keep going. But people are moving away; times are hard, and I do not see just how we can keep open. Do you know what the collection was last Sunday? Thirty-five cents!

Second Deacon: There will be cold weather soon; we shall need a caretaker to see that the fires are kept going. But we cannot pay for one; what is to be done?

(There is a pause, people looking around waiting for someone to speak.)

Third Deacon: Could not some of us, deacons or members or others, volunteer to keep the fires going for the Lord's Day Services and the Wednesday evening prayer meetings? It does not seem so very much to do.

First Member: A fine idea! If half a dozen of us take it in turn, it would not be too heavy. I should be glad to volunteer.

Others: And I; I will help too, etc.

Senior Deacon: But what about the cleaning and the dusting?

Mrs. Bellamy: That is the women's job; at least it is so in our home, and I do not see why it should not be so here. I am sure that we can manage that.

Senior Deacon: But the real trouble is the mortgage. So many of the tradesmen have cancelled their bills that they have practically

a good part of the cost of this building. But we must pay for the mortgage ourselves. It has always been our principle never to ask for money outside of our membership. There is $165 due in a very few weeks, and I do not see how we are to meet it.

Mrs. Bellamy: Perhaps that too might be the women's job. Do you think we women might undertake to circulate a subscription list among ourselves, and not let any man sign it? We have ways of making money, even in these hard times.

Mrs. Beals: Would you not be a little nervous about going around asking women for money? Some of their husbands might object.

Mrs. Bellamy: Mrs. Beals, I fear no man and very few women. You give some of the toughest prospects to me and I'll guarantee to handle them.

First Woman: I know a country member who makes excellent butter. She once promised a crock if we needed money. I am sure we could sell it by pounds among ourselves and make quite a little bit that way.

Second girl: You know I vork for Mrs. Smit'. Ven she ask me vat church I go to, I told her the Baptist church, and she say, 'O, yes, that is the servant girls' church. But I tell her, even servant girls have souls, and I like a church dat is friendly to us, no matter vat vork ve do. Now I vill give five dollars for this m-mortgage, and if anyone can make us some mitts, good varm ones like ve had in de old country, I know quite a few girls vould buy a pair.

Mrs. Beals: I will make some, and I am sure my mother would help me.

Young girl: My father says that if I clean his boots every morning, he will pay me what he usually gives the bootblack. That ought to amount to something after a while, and I could give that.

Mrs. Bellamy: It looks as if, by self-denial and real hard work, we shall be able to weather this storm. I move that the women take over the matter of the mortgage payment; that we circulate a subscription list among ourselves, and that no man, and no one outside our membership, be approached.

Mrs. Beals: I second the motion.

Senior Deacon: Let us close this meeting with prayer; of thankfulness for past mercies, and for guidance in our present difficulties, and that it may please God to send us soon a Pastor to lead us.